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DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME MATTERS ON ITS IN-SESSIONAL MEETING HELD DURING THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, 1-18 JUNE 1993

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CHAPTER VI. EVALUATION

Evaluation

1. The Standing Committee had before it the report of the Administrator on evaluation (DP/1993/26). In his introduction, the Director of the Central Evaluation Office (CEO) noted that the report discussed, inter alia, progress in implementing the strategy for monitoring and evaluation for the fifth programming cycle and in developing an evaluation methodology with respect to the six areas of focus. It summarized the status of other work undertaken by CEO on the strengthening of national monitoring and evaluation capacity, ex-post evaluation, feedback of evaluation findings, databases and publications.

2. The Director drew attention to the shift from project- to programme-level evaluations and the successful decentralization of the management of project evaluations to the Regional Bureaux. He mentioned that draft guidelines for assessing capacity-building were being prepared that would propose a different approach to establishing indicators of progress, including the six areas of focus established in decision 90/34 of 23 June 1990. He noted the need for an improved system for monitoring programme implementation based on criteria determined at the formulation stage. Participation of national authorities and target beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation also needed to be addressed. He also noted that guidelines for country programme evaluations had been prepared; CEO had been involved in the incorporation of monitoring and evaluation structures into new programme initiatives; and a preliminary assessment of the pilot phase of the Sustainable Development Network and an evaluation of the Global Environment Facility were being undertaken. UNDP continued to convene an Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation, and the members of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) were working closely

with the JCGP subgroup on harmonization in the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992. Finally, three initiatives (feedback study, questionnaire and statistical analysis), undertaken over the past year to examine and determine the role of feedback of evaluation findings in UNDP, were mentioned and the preliminary conclusions summarized.

3. The quality of the report was commended by delegations, who noted its comprehensiveness and strategic approach. They underlined the importance of evaluation and its orientation towards results and impact. They welcomed the importance attached in the report to capacity-building for evaluation and monitoring, both inside UNDP and at the national level. One delegation noted the importance of ensuring quality control in evaluations, particularly in those carried out by end-users and by implementers.

4. Delegations stressed that CEO should continue to concentrate its evaluations on impact and not on process and should undertake more methodological studies. It should also be involved in setting priorities, strategic planning and developing indicators in such areas as poverty alleviation and capacity-building. Several delegations stressed the need to set up evaluation indicators that could serve as a basis for an early-warning system. Such indicators should be part of strategic planning and contribute towards cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

5. Many delegations stressed the need for feedback and requested that a synopsis of the feedback study be provided to the Governing Council at its forty-first session. It was essential for UNDP to show results and to indicate what worked or did not work, and why. The establishment of base-line surveys was encouraged.

6. Several delegations reiterated that mechanisms for coordination between different bodies of the United Nations system should be developed in order to make the best use of limited resources, to encourage complementarity and to enhance impact through joint efforts. The contribution of UNDP to a common United Nations system approach to evaluation and UNDP participation in efforts in the JCGP working group on harmonization was underlined.

7. With respect to the African economists programme, a few delegations suggested that UNDP use all available reliable sources of data, national as well as external, and help strengthen data collection at the national level. The representative of the Department for Development Support and Management Service emphasized in that connection the role that his Department could play in contributing to available information for field offices to keep abreast of economic developments at the country level in order to ensure the smooth functioning of United Nations programmes. One delegation stressed that the fielding of economists by UNDP was in support of the Resident Coordinators and would provide needed flexibility. The economists should be able to benefit from a variety of sources of information.

8. Many delegations expressed the view that the work of CEO was not widely known and suggested that Governing Council members be informed of the availability of new evaluation reports. There was a need to provide more information to the international community on UNDP responsiveness to its concerns. Evaluation reports could help inform national parliaments when the

level of future contributions to UNDP was being discussed. It was noted by one delegation that the country studies for China and India on monitoring the programme approach would be of great value.

9. Another issue raised by several delegations was the staffing of CEO. With reference to Governing Council decision 92/24 of 26 May 1992, in which the Council called on UNDP and the Administrator to strengthen CEO, delegations pointed out that the lack of follow-up on this point unavoidably limited CEO capacity to implement fully its work plan and affected accountability. Several delegations reiterated their position on the need to strengthen CEO staffing. In that connection, several delegations considered that the CEO work plan was ambitious and its priorities should be reviewed and such cost-effective approaches as joint evaluations with other partners within and outside the United Nations system, including donors, be considered in order to disseminate results and methodologies. One delegation suggested focusing on such corporate concerns as the programme approach and national execution. Another requested clarification on the criteria used for the thematic and geographical allocations under the first objective of the work plan and on the use and impact of Special Programme Resources (SPRs).

10. In response, the Director, CEO, expressed appreciation for the interest and support for the work of CEO. He provided additional information on the dissemination of evaluation reports; quality control of project evaluation in collaboration with Regional Bureaux; the use of data; indicators for country programme evaluations; the scope and scale of the CEO work programme and his dilemma in setting priorities in a context of limited resources (human and financial) versus increased demand; the concept of joint evaluations; and the use of SPR.

11. The Committee took note of the report of the Administrator and subsequently recommended that the Governing Council approve the draft decision contained in document DP/1993/SCPM/L.3/Add.8/Rev.1.